

Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

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News

If you are an ATCO subscriber, you probably saw that Bill Clapper has discontinued the publication. It was becoming obvious that NATCA was moving into the dominant position, especially with the advertisers. The last issue of Talkin' Tokens was 96 pages. It included a nice article by Dick Magnuson on the Erickson's tokens from Portland, OR.

The Idaho Historical Society will be breaking ground June 2 at 10:30 a.m. for the new Library and Archives building to be located near the Old Penitentiary. The first phase will be to move the Society's storage from its present facility in a warehouse near the Boise River to this climate-controlled facility. Ultimately this project will allow easier access to the vast amount of material in the Society's collections. Now a researcher has to request material several days in advance so it can be located and transported to the Library. The Library itself will not move until late in the process, which is a good deal for me as I can walk to the Library from my office during lunch breaks now.

In early May I took a day off work and spent a few hours visiting Lynn and Lois Langdon in Buhl. Lynn will be having one of the large auction houses dispose of his stamps, coins, and early paper. Watch for the sales as there is much extremely nice material. Also watch for an article on the "restrike" tokens Lynn and Frank Schell "struck" to illustrate Schell's book. Also on that trip I stopped at the Elmore and Gooding County Records offices and found some nice research sources in their records.

It seems that there are a number of old car hobbyists among us. Perhaps tokens and cars go together? Or is it just old stuff? Kendall Ballard was restoring an old Studebaker before the Teton Dam disaster washed it away. Mike Fritz and Robert Higdem have old pickups, and Dan Lute is working on getting one. I am working on a 1957 Mercedes station wagon as time permits. Recently I received word on the Mercedes e-mail list that a fellow in Pullman, WA was giving away some parts cars, so I took a few days off in mid-May to drive up there and haul one home. While there, I met Bob Berg and traded a few tokens with him. I had to miss the Lewiston Gun and Antique show due to the fact that every motel room in the area was full for the University of Idaho graduation.

While on this car quest trip, I spent a day in the vaults of the County Records of Idaho, Nez Perce, and Latah Counties. I was able to get quite a bit of good information, especially data regarding early liquor and billiard table licenses.

Dick Magnuson promises a write-up soon on another nifty source for information on token-using businesses. Often an operator bought pool tables, bar fixtures, etc. from a supplier who "carried the paper". To insure repayment, the paper was recorded, and these records provide business details we need.

Regarding last month's article about the City Transfer dray check from Bonners Ferry, Kendall Ballard commented on the harness fobs he has seen. I suspect that some localities licensed this type of business and the fobs were issued as proof that the fee had been paid, similar to an automobile license plate. Anybody have information on this?

It would be interesting to know all of the types of licenses required over the years in Idaho, and how they were administered. For instance, I have a punchboard with three "Idaho Punch Board Tax" decals affixed, two at \$2.00 and one at 10¢. In the 1933 session of the Idaho legislature, House Bill No. 94 was enacted "Requiring licenses for the operation, maintenance or establishment of stores in this state; prescribing the license and filing fees to be paid therefor, etc., etc., and providing that the revenue derived shall be deposited in the state school fund, etc., and repealing all conflicting acts". The Commissioner of Finance was charged with administering this act, but I have been unable to locate any archives regarding this law. I can imagine that every retail business (except ones which were strictly gasoline filling stations—they were exempted) would be listed in such archives.

The Get-Together

Mike Fritz says to mark Saturday and Sunday, July 26 and 27, 1997, on your calendars for the a weekend of token trading and socializing. A motel in the Boise area will be the site with details to follow. Mike and Dean Rasmussen have also been making plans for a side trip to visit either Silver City or Idaho City. Be sure to bring your traders, your collection (if at all possible), and any other Idaho-related material you collect for trading and showing. I will work on getting an appropriate hotel/motel so that spouses and/or kids will have something to do. There are several choices: near the Boise Town Square Mall, downtown, or the ones with pools, play areas for the kids and the like. Preferences???

If you know of other Idaho collectors who may not be receiving this newsletter, please pass the word so that we can get as many collectors there as possible.

The Salt Lake show

The National Utah Token Society (NUTS) is holding their yearly Salt Lake Coin and Token Show on June 27, 28, and 29 at the National Guard Armory #2, 1523 Sunnyside Avenue. Hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. with closing at 4 p.m. Sunday. Be there!

More Mavericks needing help

Here are some more mavericks in the continuing series of ones which have been attributed, but for which I cannot find a directory listing, etc. Help if you can.

DEN / SWEETS and DEN / O / SWEETS (Fruitland)

FRANK / BRUNO (Coeur d'Alene)

J. M. (Corral) (I have numerous references to John May / confectionery, but no real proof that these tokens are from his business. Hemphill lists these as Portland, OR)
SMAWLEY'S / SMOKE HOUSE (Craigmont / Ilo)

J. & V. / LANE (Lane)

LEWIS and CLARK CAFETERIA (Lewiston)

TONEY (McCall)

SPRAGUE'S (Burley / Twin Falls)

GRILLI BROS / DOVER (Dover)

The Orofino Trading Company

On the south side of Orofino Creek, just above the point where it flows into the Clearwater River, Clifford C. Fuller platted the Orofino townsite on part of the land he had homesteaded when the Nez Perce Indian Reservation was opened for settlement in November, 1895. Fuller established a trading post and started the Clearwater Improvement Company which operated a ferry across the river and sold lots in the town.

Construction of the Clearwater Short Line of the Northern Pacific Railroad to Orofino in 1899 started a major boom for the new town. Orofino was to be the division point, and that brought both construction and operating men to the town. Among the first support businesses were Ole A. Anderson and Axel E. Holmberg, who built a 16- by 24-foot building to house their general merchandise business in August, 1899. Both men were born in Sweden in 1862, Anderson on January 31, and Holmberg on March 5. Both came to the United States where they met and entered into a general merchandising partnership in St. Peter, MN, later expanding into real estate and banking before moving to Idaho.

Anderson retained his interest in the partnership, then called I. M. Anderson & Company after his wife, Ingrid M. Anderson, but he was also involved in real estate, mining, and lumbering. He was elected to the Idaho House of Representatives from Shoshone County for the 1903-04 term. Orofino was originally in Shoshone County, then Nez Perce, and finally the seat of Clearwater County when it was created February 27, 1911.

In January, 1903, Axel Holmberg, his wife Blanda, William and Alma Haevernick, and Frank W. Kettenbach incorporated the Orofino Trading Company with \$8,000 of Capital stock. Both this business and the town of Orofino thrived until tragedy struck Orofino as it had hit many other pioneer towns. Fire broke out at 3 a.m. on September 28, 1906 in the Noble Hotel on Main Street. The proprietor, D. A. McKinney, said the fire was discovered near ground level on the east end of the hotel, but guests thought the fire had started in the upper story because both it and the roof were engulfed in flames when they were aroused. McKinney was later arrested then released for lack of evidence on arson charges. It seems that he and his Chinese cook had argued the previous evening and it was thought that the Chinaman had started the fire in revenge; McKinney was held responsible for his employee's actions by the citizenry. The fire quickly spread to neighboring businesses and jumped Main Street, soon consuming most of Orofino's business district. By 6 a.m. the fire was finally controlled by the valiant efforts of the townspeople, aided by the natural barrier of Orofino Creek.

The final toll was 15 businesses and many residences destroyed. Some 200 people were left homeless and losses were estimated at \$75,000 with only about \$20,000 of that amount covered by insurance. The Orofino Trading Company's losses were \$15,000 with only \$7,000 of insurance. Soon, though, all over town the talk was of rebuilding.

The editor of the Lewiston Evening Teller (whose presses were used by the burned-out Orofino Tribune to continue publication) was prophetic in his editorial:

The disaster that has come to Orofino is a severe loss not only to that city, but to the community that looks to it as a business center. But her citizens show the right spirit in facing the future bravely with a determination to rebuild the town and to repair their fortunes. The town is admirably located

to serve the needs a large section of the country. The disaster may hinder its growth for a time, but the new Orofino will be more substantially built and better protected and rise rapidly to take its place in the growth and development of the surrounding section.

Just as the rebuilding was started, a second blow was dealt the community. On November 24, 1906 another fire broke out from a lamp overturned by N. E. Prudhomme in the upper story of his building. He threw his bedding onto the blaze in an effort to smother it, but that only caused the fire to spread more rapidly. Bucket brigades were formed to save the buildings of the White Pine Trading Company, John Buescher's Orofino Mercantile Company, and several residences, but both the Prudhomme Building and Mrs. G. B. Wetson's Reynolds Hotel were lost in the inferno. This fire did an estimated \$6,000 damage with only \$800 insured.

The Orofino Trading Company built a fine brick building in 1907, showing their confidence in the area's economy. Ole Anderson was again elected to the Idaho House of Representatives for the 1907-08 session, indicating the respect he had in the county.



Axel Holmberg followed his partner's footsteps into the political arena when he was elected to the House for the 1911-12 term. Holmberg was also on the Orofino City Council and served as mayor. The partners' business ties evidently did not influence their political leanings, though, because Anderson was a Republican and Holmberg was a Democrat.



With the 10-year charter of their corporation running out, the stockholders of the Orofino Trading Company met in July, 1912 to extend their corporate existence for 30 years. They also increased their capital stock level to \$60,000. At this time, Ole Anderson was President, Axel Holmberg was Secretary and General

Manager; the other stockholders were Ingrid Anderson, Blanda Holmberg, William T. Bennell, and Jollie G. Bullock

At about this time, Ole Anderson was stricken with cancer of the stomach. He went to Moscow for an operation, but it proved unsuccessful and he died at home on September 22, 1912, leaving his widow and children, Hulda and Arthur.

After 1918 the company was taken over by W. M. Watson who carried on the business. In March of 1922 the company assigned its assets to Mr. J. D. Merkle of the Spokane Merchants Association to satisfy its debts. P. H. Boesche managed the business for Merkle until May when H. C. Netzel purchased the business. Netzel had operated similar general merchandise stores of the Camas Prairie for some 20 years. He promptly

changed the name of the business to the "Cash Store" and promised to carry the same line of groceries and furnishings as before, but now on a strictly cash basis. With the change of ownership and forfeiture of its corporate charter in December, 1922, the Orofino Trading Company ceased to exist.

Tokens known from this business are octagon, aluminum, and of 5¢, 10¢, 25¢, and 50¢ denominations. There is probably a \$1.00 member of this set, but it has not been reported to me yet. Presently two to five pieces are known for each of the denominations.

Buys and Corey

Last month I reported the attribution of the BUYS and COREY mavericks to Emmett as Canyon County pool table licenses were issued to the partnership in 1909. I have since received three letters from British Columbia collectors about the tokens. A number of these tokens turned up there some 30 years ago. Of course, tokens do travel around and it is possible that one of the partners took their stock of tokens with him when he moved farther northwest, but it makes me wonder...

Robb Mercantile Company Limited

Harry A. Robb was an enterprising young man of 24 when he came to Nampa in 1903 to establish the Robb Clothing Company. Born in Creston, Iowa, he worked for his father's newspaper there before moving to Pueblo, Colorado. In Pueblo he gained experience for which he would later be acclaimed, as advertising manager for the White and Davis Mercantile Company. In Nampa his men's clothing store grew to become the second largest men's apparel establishment in Idaho at the time of his death. He advertised that his was the oldest store in the community under one management.

Robb's intent was to expand his business to become a chain of men's stores throughout the region. His first expansion was to the then-booming Thunder Mountain mining area northeast of Stibnite. By 1904 Robb's famed advertising claimed that the Robb Mercantile Company was the largest such establishment in the Thunder Mountain District. The store carried groceries, canned goods, coffee, blankets, clothing, boots, whiskey, brandy, and cigars so that "Prospectors, Miners, Packers, Everyone will find it profitable to trade with us." In 1905 Robb and two principal partners, E. L. Abbott and Samuel Woolf, the store manager, incorporated the Robb Mercantile Company, Limited, with a capital of \$24,000. Presumably this business was chartered differently than the Robb Clothing Company to allow it to carry groceries and operate a saloon in the mining area. The articles of incorporation place the business at Sunnyside, near Roosevelt, the post office. The Sunnyside Mine was about two miles east of the Roosevelt townsite.

The gold mining boom in the Thunder Mountain District faded away by 1907 and the area was dealt a blow in the spring of 1909 when a landslide dammed Monumental Creek below Roosevelt and the few inhabitants watched as the resulting lake flooded the town. Robb forfeited the charter of the Mercantile Company in 1912, having no further need to operate under that name instead of the Robb Clothing Company.

In 1906 Harry Robb and his brother Gladstone opened a branch of the Robb Clothing Company in Weiser. Gladstone operated the Weiser store while the Nampa store

remained under Harry's management. Harry Robb died of heart failure on January 26, 1913 at his brother's home in Weiser where he had stopped on his way home from a visit to Portland, Oregon. He had suffered medical problems for years, having originally gone west from Iowa for his health. His death at age 34 with only three stores in his hoped-for chain ended what was once a promising future.

The two 21mm, brass tokens from the Robb Mercantile Company Limited are attributed to Roosevelt, however they could be said to be from Sunnyside as well. More research is



needed to prove this point. ROOS-1 says ROBB MER. CO. LTD and ROOS-1(A) says ROBB MRCTLE. CO. LTD. They were probably intentionally made as mavericks to accommodate Robb's vision of businesses in many area towns. They were possibly acceptable in trade at the Nampa and/or Weiser Robb Clothing Company stores, but there appears to have been an intentional separation between the two businesses.

Best,

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